

blak star

summer 1988 volume 2 number 1





BLAK STAR

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1
summer 1988

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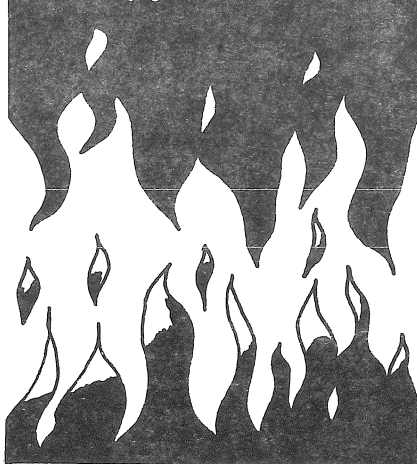
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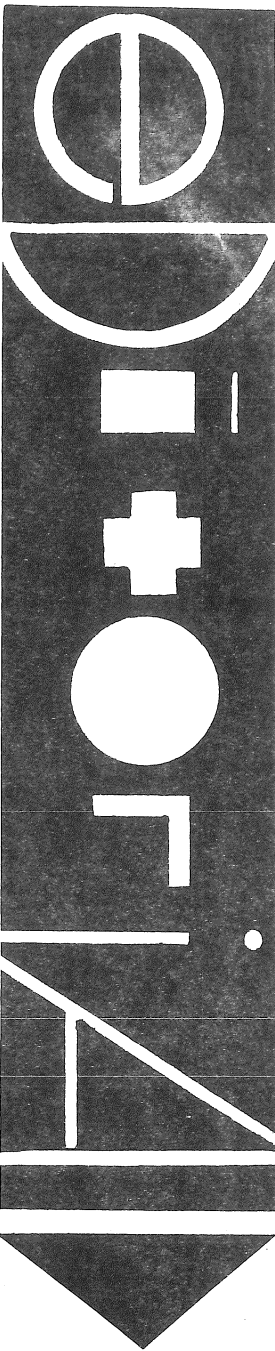


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W I T H I N



Well its finally finished, Blak Star, Volume 2, Number 1. There are two outstanding features in this issue. The first being how incredibly late it is, the second being how damn good it looks. Those involved in its production are quite pleased with the effort despite our inability to maintain our self imposed production schedule. The next issue we are pleased to say is more likely to be out on time with the preliminary work (whatever that means) already being done. We hope to still get four issues out this year.

On to more serious matters though. Ideologically (from an anarchist perspective) the left in Australia is floundering. Not for many years have the left been so incredibly fragmented or as likely to experience an injection of new energy from a new generation of "politically aware" people. These two assertion may seem to contradict each other, but there are reasons why they both stand as true.

The forces of conservatism are on a roll. With the decline in the world economy, politicians and the bosses have had to toss the 'subtle control rule book' out the window, and start to assert their divine right and status. No sacrifice is too great to ensure that the elite of society maintain their positions at the top of the pecking order. In the newspapers economists speak of the end of the use of 'taxation as the great social leveller' (has it ever been). The governments of the world have no trouble now in explaining to their people that business must come before workers and as such the workers must support business and their bosses through higher personal taxes.

Working conditions, welfare, health, life itself have fallen by the wayside, the state is collapsing and must be prevented from doing so at all costs.

The new government legislation to outlaw unions with less than 3,000 members is a result of the crisis of the state. Larger and fewer unions will, according to the government's logic, prevent industrial turmoil. This of course they openly admit; workers must forego their autonomy and their right to protect their own individual interests for the sake of the bosses and the state. What have the unions been doing during all this? They have been very

quiet. The larger unions have a lot to gain from the legislation and are not ashamed of who they sleep with any longer.

This new conservatism is manifesting itself as blatant oppression and bias world wide. Minority groups such as migrants, women, indigenous peoples, workers (a minority only in so far as most see their only hope of escaping their malaise as being their steady climb up the social ladder and a rejection of their proletarian origins, and the inability of that group to organise itself), and young unemployed are all feeling the pinch to such a degree that any resistance has, in the majority of cases, led to the proliferation of single issue campaigns.

Very little has appeared in the leftist literature concerning a total view and critique of the present situation. Problems are observed to be specific ills. Thus the government has "racist policies", or "sexist attitudes", or "bad industrial relations". The problem has not been clearly identified as it should be. The problem is that hierarchical structures are oppressive and must be so. Change will not come about through petitioning the government on particular issues. Oppression itself must be squarely targeted as the problem wherever it appears. Very few left wing activists at the present time incorporate a wholistic critique of the system into whatever issue it is that most are concerned with. Without such a total critique separate left wing movements will not be able to co-ordinate effectively. Of course such a fragmented movement is very much in the interests of both the institutionalised left and the right. Left wing party politicians can hardly make reference to the inherent oppression in representative structures.

The blatant oppression of people is turning many towards left wing politics in all its guises. Especially with the spectre of a right wing takeover of the federal government (N.S.W. as the first line of defence has already fallen), posters are appearing on city streets with headlines such as "Leading Revolutionary Socialist...", the likes of which have not been seen for a while. (What is a leading revolutionary socialist anyway. Does tis mean that they throw more bricks on the streets or that they have more to say about the people who do. My guess is that instead of riding in on the backs of the

voters, these so called leading revolutionary socialist hope to ride into government on the backs of the rioters.) Unfortunately, it is the established left wing political groups are most likely to benefit from any spin offs from the the current oppressive regime, and we are unlikely to see a dramatic increase in the number of people organising themselves to confront their problems. The reason why people will be signing their lives away, is because hierarchical representative structures are still not popularly acknowledged to be the cause of the problem in the first place.

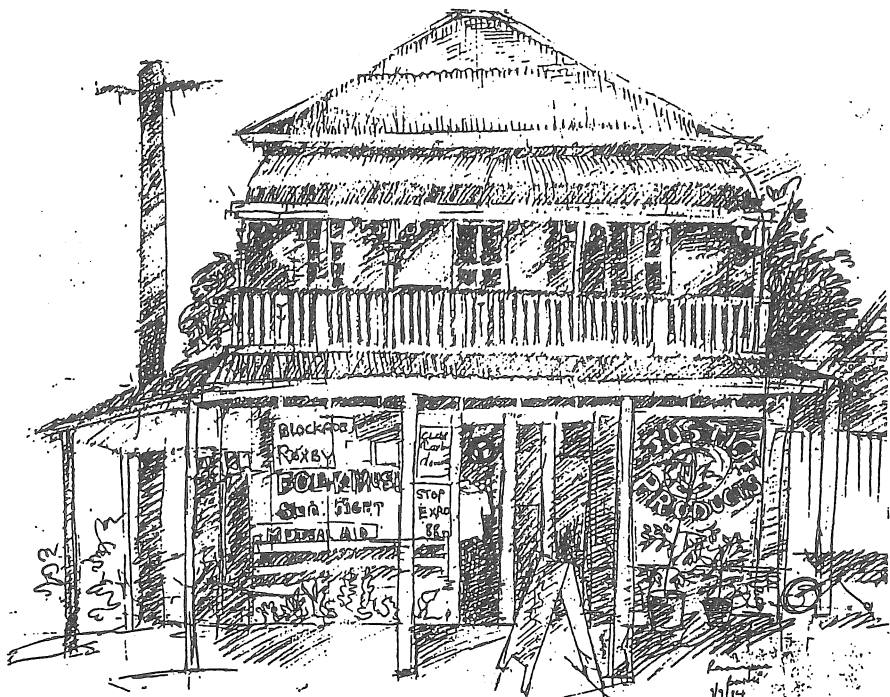
Just one more thought. The United States has a debt of about two trillion dollars. Taxation will not be able to pay this debt off as well as support the bureaucracy at the same time. Who is going to bail the governments out? Get ready - the legitimate corporate state is coming out of the closet.



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Rape

by Steve Crowley

INTRODUCTION

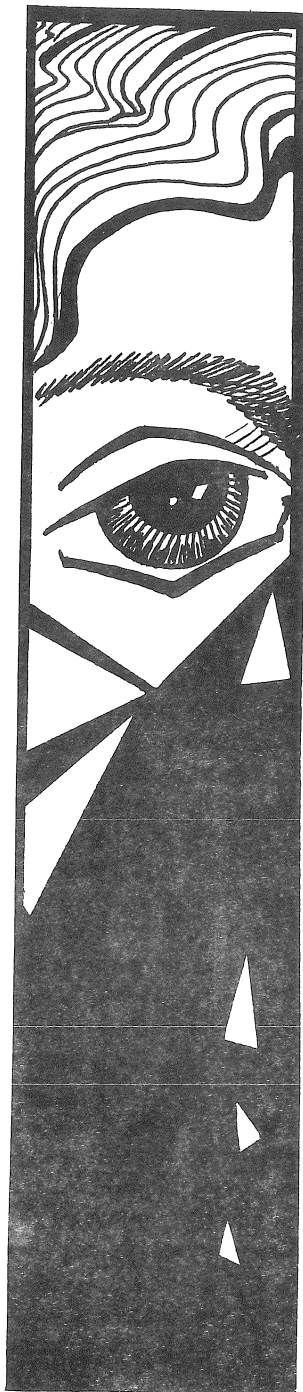
When a woman I know found out I was writing about rape, she asked, "What would you know about that?"

The question addresses a fairly important issue. What does any man really know about rape? How can any man understand the humiliation and degradation that is part of rape. How can any man know how it feels to have his sexual autonomy disregarded and be used as an outlet of contempt.

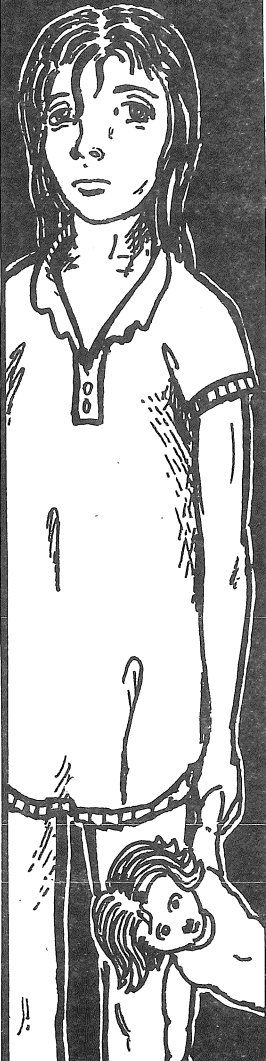
Except for those men raped by other men, no man can begin to understand the oppressive state that the threat of rape places women in. Worse still, most men don't care about the fear that their sexist attitudes generate. Then there are those men who rape.

As a man writing about rape I cannot empathise from the position of women on this subject. However, writing from an anarchist perspective I must stress that I find all forms of inequality and oppression to be the most objectionable aspects of human society. Rape is the most blatant expression of contempt towards women by a male dominated society, and inherent in it are all the forces of its inequality and oppression.

This was originally written for a Sociology course and has been adapted for Blak Star. Much of the academic bullshit and pedantry demanded by the education institution have been removed to hopefully provide some less stilted and easier reading.



(1) Against Rape, Medea and Thompson: p.11



(2) The Facts of Rape, Toner



Of all the abuse women suffer in a male dominated society, the threat or actual act of rape is amongst the most oppressive. Essentially "rape is all the hatred, contempt, and oppression of women in this society concentrated into one act"(1). Male dominated society fosters these attitudes, providing an environment which encourages the attacker and removes the status of 'victim' from raped women. Rape is a patriarchal institution; the act and attitude constitutes and perpetuates an ideology of women hating. Myths have been conceived and practically applied through this ideology. The mythology is part of a 'popular truth' which acts as the justification for male acts of degradation and abuse against women. Given this, there are many untruths and misconceptions which surround rape, many of which avoid the issue of women's autonomy, as well as the degradation and social stigma of rape. For example, rape is not always physically violent; it is rarely the work of a psychotic stranger; and finally, it is hardly ever sexually motivated. Rape is an act by men against women, against their body, their mind, their dignity, their individual sexual self-determination and especially against their right to social freedom. The instrument of this abuse is the ideology of rape, the processes of which continue to hinder the attainment of freedom for all women.

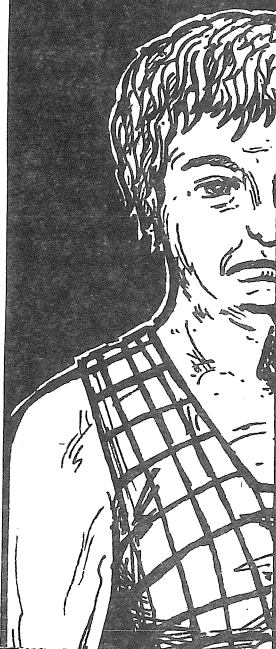
Socialisation has long been the process through which the members of society are assimilated into so called 'appropriate' gender roles. These highly segregated roles are widely accepted as the expected behaviour for men and women; masculinity and femininity respectively. The masculine male perceives a need to be dominant and aggressive in all the arenas of his life, and because of the present social structure he is allowed to pursue and accomplish such goals. The image of femininity is an exact opposite. Women are expected to be passive, gentle and subservient, again it is the processes of socialisation which force women into accepting this role. While the 'passive' role for women is being eroded by feminist actions there is still a great resistance of this by the men who dominate the social power base and are determined to maintain it. For example, Toner (2) discusses the image of women conveyed to society through the male dominated media, undeniably an intrinsic component of Western socialisation. She argues that as

children develop sexually they are bombarded with images of gender stereotypes; exploitation and violence against women are not uncommon themes. The concept of the ideal Western beauty is also very popular. Women are depicted as 'sleek', 'smooth', 'vulnerable' and 'submissive', and Tweedie says, "in our culture a women's real basic attraction is still inextricably wound up in the amount of helplessness she can convey"(3). In our society, the amount of make-up a woman wears, whether she is prepared to dehair most of her body and coiffure the rest, perfume, manicure and cripple herself in high heels - all for the sake of attracting men - will equal her degree of submission and thus, her 'beauty'. Dworkin (4) argues that women have been programmed by culture to believe that they should be beautiful. Accepting this ideology serves to strengthen the 'romantic ethos' of heterosexual relationships, giving it energy and justification. Heterosexuality is entwined within the ideology of rape; its promotion allows for rape to be passed off as simply 'normal sex gone wrong'.

Heterosexuality is a male/female relationship designed specifically for the benefit of men. It allows the man to take control of not only his own sexuality but also that of the woman in the relationship. Carmody pinpoints the consequences of this social attitude as establishing "the environment for rape to be an extension of accepted normal heterosexual behaviour"(5). Toner describes heterosexual courtships as being characterised by a pervading undercurrent of antagonism, it is based on a system which is not too dissimilar from capitalism: payment for services rendered. The dominant male initiates contact with the woman, he plans activities with her and pays the bill. In return for his attentions he is likely to expect, if not actual sexual intercourse, other sexual intimacies. A myth perpetuated through socialisation is that women 'play hard to get' and that they are expected to resist the advances of men; it is seen as part of the Western courtship ritual. Dworkin argues that the reluctance of women is defined as a sexual tactic, men perceive it to be a further invitation to sex and continue their advances. If, despite the resistance and lack of consent from the woman, the man still performs acts of sexual intimacy with her, then that man has committed an act of rape. The woman has fallen victim to what Toner describes

(3) *ibid*: p.55

(4) Woman Hating, Dworkin



(5) 'The Fear of Rape', Carmody - in Social Alternatives Vol.4, No.3: p.21





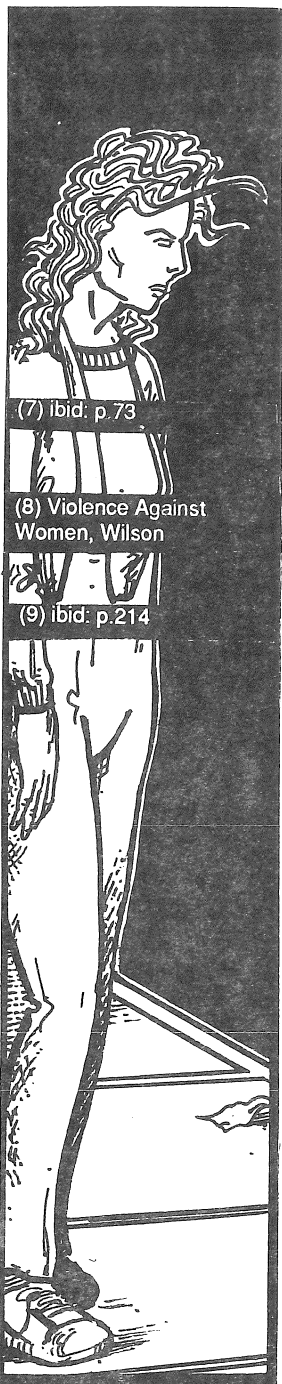
as the 'heterosexual rape trap', for while women are expected to attract men they are also held responsible for resisting any unwanted advances. Without any signs of resistance the rape is seen only as standard heterosexual intercourse. Thus it is possible to see why Dworkin says of rape that it "offends us when it does ... because it is a man/woman relationship without sham - without the mystifying romance of the couple (or) the civility of a money exchange"(6). Heterosexuality provides an environment suitable for the manufacture of myths central to the rape ideology.

Male control of the heterosexual relationship has been the means through which women have been subordinated into personal sexual property. Medea and Thompson argue that this means women are not protected from the actions of men, and until these attitudes change women will still be the victims of rape. Where women are seen as a man's sexual property - as they are depicted in the male dominated Western media, and have been and still are in most other cultures - they easily become the target for sexual abuse. Throughout history women have been raped as a matter of course in wars because, as Medea and Thompson explain, women are seen by soldiers as objects to be used in their war with other men: 'sexual property' in a male power struggle. In customs surrounding the bastion of heterosexuality - marriage - a man takes complete ownership of the woman; all her possessions, her service and her body. In most parts of the world a woman is not capable of charging her husband with rape because she is seen by society and law to be his property. There has been little change, despite 'law reforms', and rape is considered to be the theft of a woman's property: her virtue. The onus is placed upon the woman to guard this 'property' from the advances of men. Virtue itself is only a male valued object, but the fact that it can be made the central issue of rape indicates the degree to which men control and define women's sexuality.

Certain ways of depicting the sexuality of women is central to the ideology of rape. Many myths surround the sexual expression of women and are used as justifications for misogynist abuse. The most universal myth is that there are only two kinds women: those who are virgins and those who

are not. In fact, male dominated cultures define women in predominately sexual terms - 'pure' or 'promiscuous'. Under such circumstances there is no consideration of women as autonomous human beings. Today, where Western culture claims to be moving away from the 'virginity taboo', there is an increasing tendency for women to be thought of as the sexual playthings of men. Heterosexual pornography is the most blatant example of this trend. It covers a wide range from advertising to the hardest core; however all forms share in common the depiction of women as sex objects. In pornography, Dworkin explains, "the image of women is that of insatiable cunt ... women are seen as wanting to be fucked, raped, violated and abused"(7). If the image of women is so easily debased in the eyes of society, what then of the way in which women are treated as a result? Wilson (8) discusses the debate over pornography and the claim that it leads to violence against women. One particular campaign against porn used the slogan 'Porn is the Theory. Rape is the Practice'(9), however Wilson argues that not all feminists see pornography as a direct incitement for violence towards women, and that such attitudes are over simplified. There is no solid evidence that heterosexual pornography teaches men to rape, but its existence and overwhelming tendency to depict women as sexual objects submitting to misogynist fantasies reveals much about society's attitudes towards women. The belief that women are promiscuous yet submissive only justifies society's attitude that women want to be raped. The effects this has on the legal system is to persecute the women for being a victim, rather than the man for being a rapist.

If society characterises women in terms of their male defined sexuality, then the laws of that society will uphold and reinforce these attitudes. Male control over women's sexuality has led to the belief that all women 'desire' and are willing to engage in heterosexual intercourse and consequently, male control of the legal system means women must prove that they did not consent to intercourse to prove they have been raped. If women are seen as 'sexual creatures' then it becomes easier for the law to define rape as an act against a woman's sexuality, rather than an act against her person. Women are held responsible for denying the access of men to their body, and if a woman cannot



(7) *ibid*: p. 73

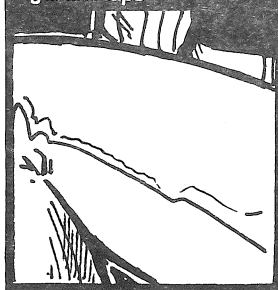
(8) Violence Against Women, Wilson

(9) *ibid*: p. 214

(10) The Facts of Rape:
p.256



(11) See: The Other Side of
Rape, P. Wilson and;
Against Rape



prove that she did not resist his advances to the utmost, even to the extent where resistance would have resulted in physical injury or even death, it is deemed that the woman wanted intercourse, and no rape occurred. Toner sums up the situation when she attacks the existing legal system: "when the law was, and remains, inspired by the sanctity of the untorn hymen, how dare (the rape victim) admit she valued her eyes, her ribs or nose more than protection of her virtue?" (10). A catch-22 is created for women by the ideology of rape. If a woman puts herself in a 'compromising' situation with other men - if she is exercising her right to be a free individual within this society - and she gets raped, and there is no proof, no signs of her resistance, then the law decides that her behaviour indicated promiscuity and a disregard for her virtue. However, for the woman to behave as society deems 'proper for a woman' is for her to believe that she is not entitled to autonomy, which further strengthens the oppressive powers of the rape ideology. Current rape laws free men from the consequences of their actions and create myths which make the majority of rapes invisible to the public.

Many rapists have been acquitted because they 'proved' their victim was leading them on. Furthermore, sensationalism of more violent rapes by the media, in which the rapist is depicted as a psychotic stranger and the victim as sexually 'pure', has placed the majority of rapes beyond the attention of the public. This social loop-hole leads many men to perceive women as socially permitted victims; that rape can be committed and remain unpunished. Mythologies will lure a victim into thinking that she led her rapist/s on by the way she acted, dressed and where she was, or that 'she got what she deserved'. A society that nurtures the belief that women 'deserve to be raped' reveals its misogynist attitudes and the insecurities it feels about women being able to express their rights to freedom within that society. Studies indicate (11) that most rapes are actually premeditated and planned rather than the result of uncontrollable sexual urges. Most rapes are committed by either relatives or men acquainted to the victim, not by psychotic strangers. And significantly, most rapes go unreported, a large percentage of claims are not prosecuted by the police, and only one third of rapists reported and caught are ever

convicted of rape. Today, despite supposed 'law reforms', the legal system is still designed to protect men from the 'accusations' of women who, according to the popular mythology, wanted to be raped, humiliated and denied their sexual autonomy. It is not up to the man to contain his 'uncontrolable sex urges' for that responsibility falls to the woman, and her apparent failure to do so will label her as a 'prick-teaser' and an 'easy-lay' by society.

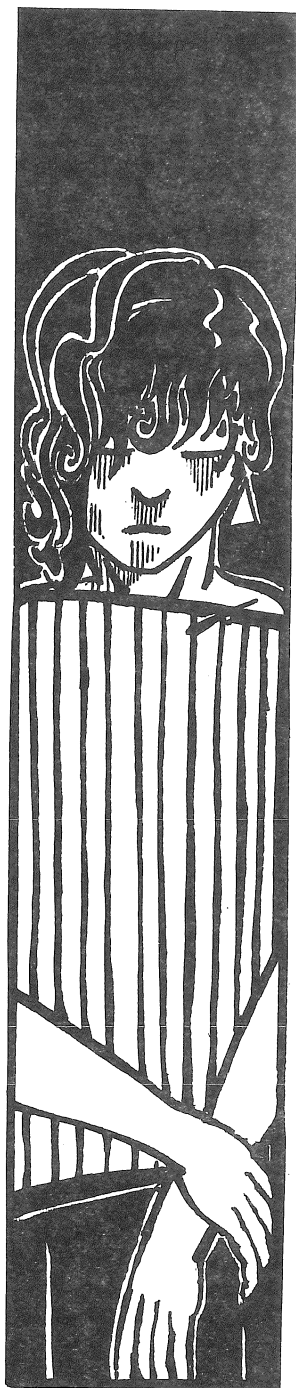
Until these attitudes change there will be no true freedom, sexually or otherwise, for women. There will be no justice for the victim until rape is treated seriously as a crime against her autonomy and a crime against all women. It must be recognised that mythologies about rape have been perpetuated by a society dominated by male ideals; these mythologies allow women to be sexually exploited and abused. In societies of this nature, and this is nearly every society in the world, it must be recognised that all women are potential victims of rape. Brownmiller claims that rape is "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear"(12), because men have no interest in reducing the amount of fear women have of rape. Reducing this fear increases freedom for women, eroding the power and domination which men hold in society. Wilson describes rape and other instances of misogynist abuse as "forms of punishment for women who have stepped out of line ... and attempts to reimpose patriarchal discipline in a society that is no longer patriarchal"(13). Fear of rape forces women to live in fear of men and accept the dominance of men; this has the function of forcing women to accept their social femininity. The sexual revolution was meant to free women to operate as autonomous, sexually independent human beings. As such women should be able to interact with men knowing there are no sexual strings attached, and that both were on equal footing. Men, believing in their right to exercise their social masculinity, do not see it this way. They either perceive the woman to be promiscuous or 'out of her proper territory', in either case the woman is compromised and runs the risk of being raped. Therefore the function of the ideology of rape should be seen as the means through which men attempt to consolidate their power base - their dominance over women.



(12) Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape, Brownmiller: p.15

(13) Violence Against Women: p.38





Components of the rape ideology interact between many complex social forces. What should be clear is that these forces work against women, oppressing them and the expression of their sexuality, while allowing men to continue their misogynist abuses. Myths surrounding rape give the image that only some men are rapists, that the rest can be trusted and are in fact needed to provide security for women against the 'psychotic fringe element'. Accepting this will place the woman in jeopardy of being raped by her 'protector'. Mythology makes allusions to women's sexuality; yet this is a male perception to justify the behaviour of men towards women - including rape. Women are blamed for initiating their rape, thus removing the responsibility of men from their actions. All these attitudes stem from the way men in power define the way society organises itself. Reinforcement of gender roles and the application of this to heterosexual relationships has diverted society's attention away from the obvious inequalities between men and women. The ideology of rape has proven to be a very effective way for the male dominated society to police its power base for, through its application, women are prevented from being able to obtain their autonomy. Until such attitudes have been sufficiently eroded by the forces of feminism, anarchism and other radical action, rape ideology and the various mythologies it disseminates into the community will continue to oppress all women. All women will be potential victims, all men potential rapists for however long they adhere to the misconceptions of male domination. Women deserve the right to be free from sexual incriminations wherever they are, however they act and whatever they do. This freedom will never be achieved until oppressive expressions have been eliminated from social attitudes, and both women and men are equal.

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MAY 1986 REVISITED

by Bob James

In the run-up to the Australian Anarchist Centenary Celebration (AACC) the initiating group, within the Libertarian Workers for a Self Managed Society (Melbourne), grew to twenty and more when joined by independents and by specific group members, each with varying ideas of what was required. But the association worked, building the idea from meeting to meeting, and building warmth with one another, by chipping away at insularities and uncertainties until possibilities began to take flight.

I was an early member of the group, and responsible at least for the originating idea by publicising the fact that the first Anarchist organisation in Australia held its initial public meeting on 1 May, 1886. What became the widest-ranging, and certainly from an Anarchist point-of-view, the most successful May Days ever and which I was invited to open were nevertheless disappointing. For me, in fact, those 4 days are ones I deeply regret. The time since then has personally and, I believe, within the so called Movement been a time for introspection wondering what might have been. After almost two years, I have at last just about got the event in perspective and sloughed off most of my self-imposed guilt and unease about speaking out.

It would be virtually impossible to explain my reactions to anyone who didn't participate in the run-up to the event, or to anyone who knows little about the total Australian milieu generally. The failure of the AACC to achieve its potential in energising the and cementing a wider, stronger network of committed Anarchists sprang from elements there from its beginning but also from the heart of the Anarchist dilemma. No doubt the editors and readers of Blak Star would prefer a positive account of high-points and developments - but not only are there none to report, such an account would continue a major error - which is to gloss over the problems, and pretend they don't (still) exist.

In brief the official Anarchist 'movement' is stalled - a few examples:

Libertarian Workers gained some new members but yet are struggling to survive - only one Bulletin has come out in 18 months; the closed Anarres Centre in Brisbane has not re-opened, let alone spawned copies; the 2 Sydney bookshops, Jura and Black Rose teeter on the brink of closure, partly because of a lack of funds and members, and partly because of a lack of a renewing energy source. The Centennial Book has still not appeared and there are no new Anarchist groups that I know of anywhere except in Melbourne where a number of imported initiatives (e.g. Anarchist Black Cross) struggle to exist. A partial exception to this is the apparent strengthening of the group at Macquarie University and their publication Blak Star. The Anarchist Media Archives, also in Melbourne, continues to continue but only just. The walls between so-called Anarchists persist even there unfortunately - an example? - the Australian and New Zealand Anarchist Health Care Association (Melbourne-based) was not involved with the Patients' Support Group that evolved from the energetic involvement of some ASF, (Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation), (Melbourne) members in the recent Nurses' strike.

In Sydney Jura people and Black Rose people have not resolved their differences and REBEL WORKER, the newsletter which emanates more or less from the JURA group, still excludes any mention of Black Rose Bookshop from its pages. The editor still restricts content to opinions which fit with his narrow industrial-struggle view.

By the time the celebration arrived in May 1986, I was physically and mentally exhausted by six months concentrated effort, a failing love relationship which meant a great deal to me, and by an increasing frustration that what I wanted to see most at the event, a forward looking celebration through plays, poetry, dance and drama, was exactly what wasn't going to happen. So when I say May '86, was the best yet for Anarchists, this is only a measure of what was achieved despite long standing weaknesses which go back, firstly to the smallness of the numbers involved, secondly, to wounds untreated since the 1970's in some cases, thirdly to the Australian culture and psyche which few, if any, could realistically claim to have escaped, and lastly a need for substantial renovation of Anarchism itself, a task which so far has proved too daunting for suspicious, isolated, shy, fearful radicals.

These are not, then, uniquely Australian problems. In some respects Anarchism in this country is more developed but it is largely intuitive. There a number of parallels between the Venice Anarchist Gathering in 1984 and the Melbourne event. Whether the consequences have been similar I'd be interested to hear. What the Venice organising group attempted in the area of physical logistics, they did well - such as the catering, the music stage, the information stalls. These and the stunningly successful feat of simply getting it all into place were dependent on larger numbers of people than Melbourne had. Venice also had the benefit of a different approach to life in general, which meant they enjoyed themselves more easily and more variously than those who attended Melbourne.

Australian Anarchists had very little idea of what to do with elements they weren't familiar with. Visitors from overseas generally fell into the too-hard basket, and largely individual efforts like Dwayne's magnificent puppets were not appreciated as they deserved. This is simply a continuation of our not being able to trust our own responses, in particular positive responses. It's being going on for the people directly involved in organising Melbourne '86 for at least since Jura's establishment in 1976-77, an event still not adequately celebrated or acknowledged outside the Jura circle.

(continued on page 30)

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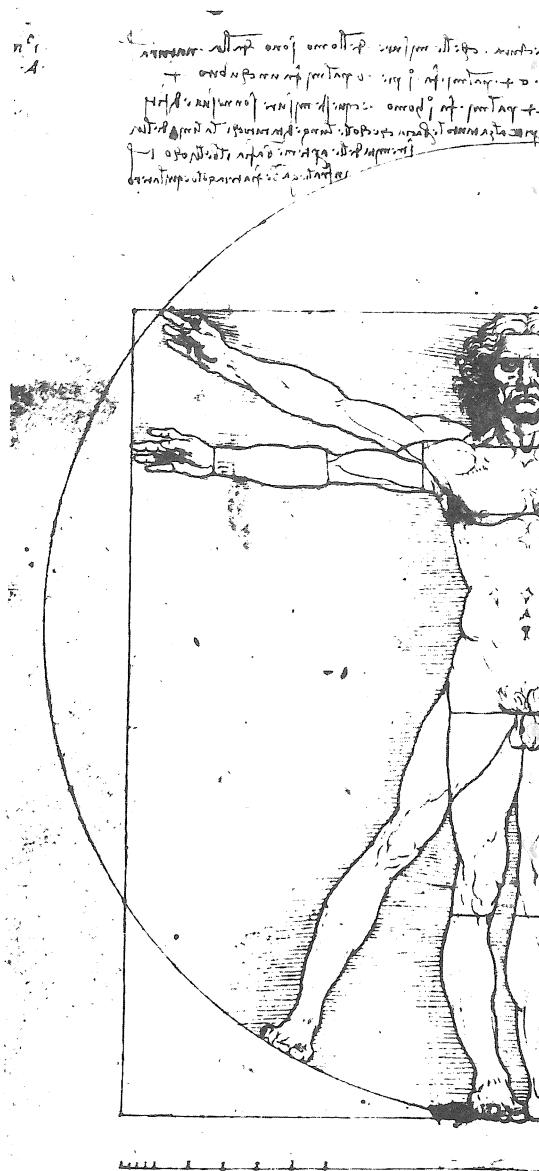
In the December issue of ANARCHY

1970 George Gardstien wrote:

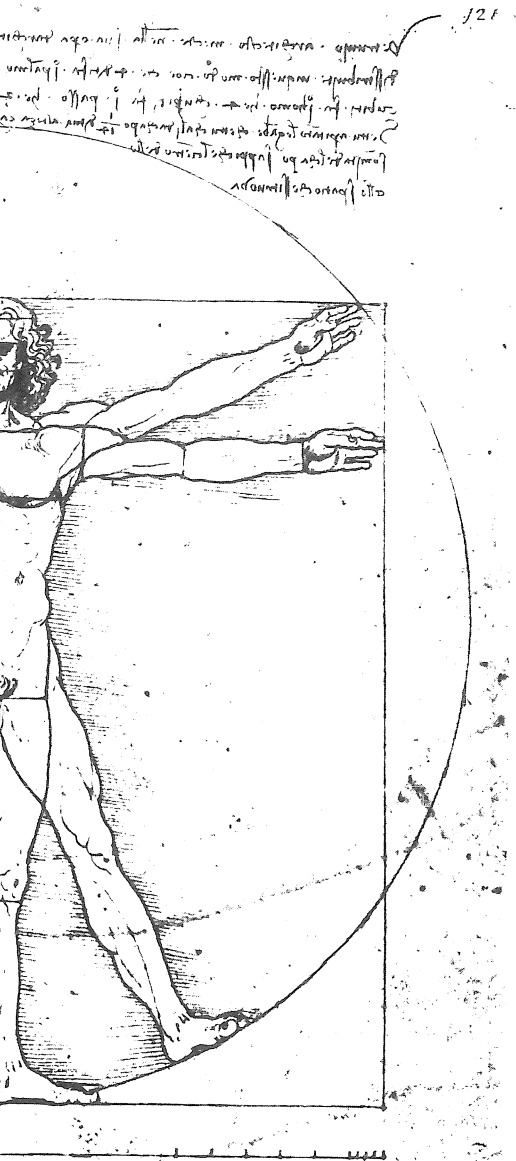
"A concern with 'the working class' or with 'workers' is not a humanistic concern, not a concern with real human beings. The term worker denotes not a full person, but a component in production, a part-person, a role. To be concerned with 'the workers' is not to be concerned with men, but with abstractions. Industrialism treats men and women as mere functions, and is concerned with them only insofar as they play their roles properly. Socialism reveals its bourgeois basis by swallowing industrial jargon and the attitude to the men that it denotes. When 'workers' stopped playing the role of allotted to them by the Bolsheviks, and marched through St. Petersburg in 1921, Lenin said they were acting against the interests of the 'working class' (which they were: they were acting in their own interests as people) and Lenin had them shot. Socialist workerism is bourgeois ideology and viciously anti-human."

It is not difficult to find close at hand illustrations which support Gardstien's thesis. Take the Right To Work Cam-

The whole of the socialist move-



NARCHISM



Party, the Communist Party, and various marxist groups participated. And what was the case they were presenting? 'Here,' they were saying, 'here is the worker imploring you the, state or monopoly capitalism, begging you to allow him to continue in his role as worker- in other words, begging you to continue to exploit him.' Is it so surprising that the Right To Work Campaign got a wonderful press?

Another example is the Jimmy Reid Sit-in. Here we had workers actually continuing to produce without being paid any wages. There was, in Jimmy's own words, to be no bevvy, no bad language, no slacking, no unofficial tea-breaks, no wondering in and out any old hour: the workers were to keep going just as if the bosses were still present, which is what they did. Some people thought this was a revolution. But the establishment and the media- they weren't fooled for a minute. Before long Jimmy was inundated with offers, all of which he swiftly accepted, to appear on TV and the newspapers to enlarge upon this strange and wonderful new departure in worker/management cooperation. Needless to say Jimmy is no longer in the industry: he is a full-time expounder of the ideology of workerism. Such men are always valuable to the state.

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Farquhar McLay, and was
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It is of course quite natural that the alienated worker should resist being thrown out of a job. It's not just the misery of the dole he has to fear. If you're doing alienated work, if you've had all forms of genuinely creative activity shut off from you all your life, your role as worker is your only source of identity. In capitalist society identity and work role are one and the same thing. The question is always what do you do for a living? and once that question is answered the proletarian need be examined no further. Whatever else he may have in him - the things he does for love rather than money - these are of no consequence, peripheral, just a way of passing time. What determines the prole's fate is not entirely his relationship with the means of production, not the amount of money he takes away in his pay cheque - because after all it would cost nothing to read the books which would open his world (or for that matter to write the books). What ultimately determines the prole's fate are the cultural class barriers within which he is trapped.

Far from trying to break down these barriers workerist propagandists like Reid and workerist politicians like Foot and Benn do their utmost to reinforce them. The idea of the worker changing into something else and ceasing to be a worker would make nonsense of their rhetoric. All right, they say, the millenium may one day come, but in the meantime we cannot allow you to be a man, a full-person, you have to stay a worker, a wage slave. They perpetuate the myth that there is something called 'the dignity of labour' - that the worker takes a pride in his work, even under capitalism, and therefore it is a crime to deprive him of 'the right to work'.

All this sounds very fine, but the reality is different. The worker is ordered to produce things on too big a scale for any one man or group of men to be able to relate to in any meaningful or self-satisfying way. They can't ask questions about what they produce. Paul Goodman in his COMMUNITAS lists some simple questions a worker ought to be able to ask:

Is the function good?
Bona fide?

Is it worthwhile?
Is it worthy of a man to do that?
What are the consequences?
Is it compatible with other basic human functions?
Is it a forthright or at least ingenious part of life?
Does it make sense?
Is the use as simple, ingenious, clear as the efficient
means that produce it?
Is the using a good experience?

How many jobs under capitalist production at the present time could stand up to that kind of scrutiny?

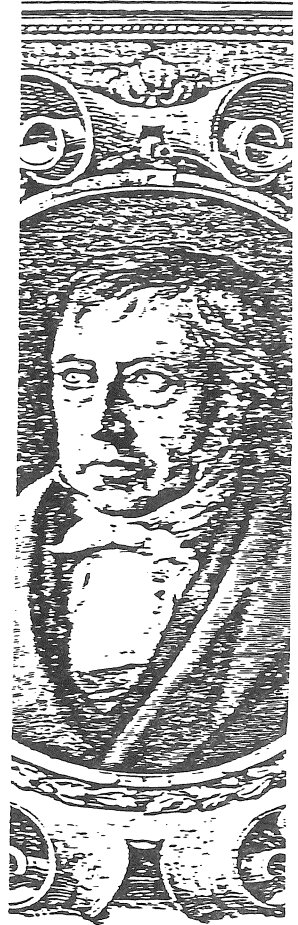
If the worker could not only ask these questions but do something about it when the answers were in the negative then it might be possible to talk about having some 'pride in his work'. The truth is he doesn't ask because he works blindly, automatically: the results of his labour have no bearing on his labour: what he thinks or doesn't think, feels or doesn't feel, has no bearing on the results of his labour: he is, in a word, alienated: he is his work and his work is alienated.

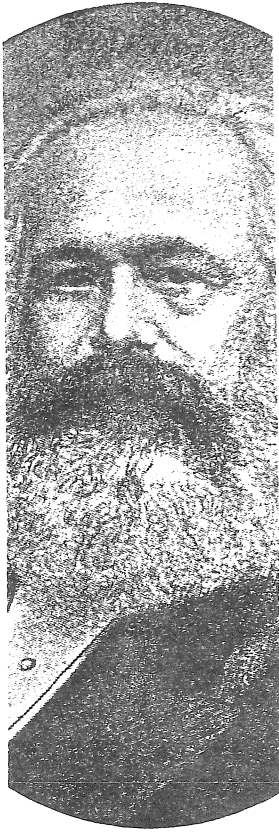
In a situation like that it is just a bad joke to talk about pride and dignity.

Only when work becomes art do the horizons broaden out sufficiently to allow us to talk about pride and dignity in labour. Generally speaking, in left-wing circles art is considered an irrelevance: a kind of fiddling while the struggle is raging elsewhere: an evasion. Marxists tend to take this view.

When Hegel was setting up his philosophical system based on the dialectic of the spirit, he rejected art, because art was rooted in the sensuous, in sensation. He saw art as an outmoded form of thinking about the world, a primitive form of seeing the world, a form which had been superseded by the intelligence, the intellect, the spirit, the mind - call it what you like. Art, as far as Hegel was concerned, had no place in the domain of the spirit.

So when Marx came along and turned Hegel's spiri-





tual dialectic on its head, turned it into a materialist dialectic, art again was left out. It just wasn't then to be dealt with. To be negated.

For marxists art has no primary dynamic: it is to be accounted for in the usual way through an economic analysis of society. The marxist doesn't see art as a special language expressing the world within us, the world of imagination, the world of the human psyche, the deepest and most personal part of man. The marxist simply sees art as a class tool expressing class interests.

You can see the marxist approach to art in the social realism that flourished in the USSR in the wake of the revolution. Art, in fact, had become simple state propaganda. It was the same in fascist Germany, and here again Hegel was the intellectual springboard. It's not so much pictures in a gallery or stage censorship or even the burning of books - it's what the denial of art means in terms of the states manipulation of the individual. Artists and writers are there to ask questions: they are there to empathise with all kinds of people, to explore every kind of human situation, to fetch up into the light of day the things which the collectivist ego, the nationalist ego, the class ego and the occupational ego strive to keep hidden. It is out of these questionings and explorations that art gets made, that experience is accumulated. If man is not free to be an artist, if he is not free to make things on which he can put his signature, so to speak, then he is not free at all.

As Kropotkin showed in *MUTUAL AID*, there was no such thing as art before capitalism. The work done in the free medieval cities we now call art. By the same token there was no such thing as a working class: each man's craft was what we now call his art. Let me just quote you a passage from Kropotkin*.

* 'Mutual Aid' pp. 210-212

'Medieval architecture attained its grandeur - not only because it was a natural development of handicraft; not only because each building, each architectural decoration, had been devised by men who knew through the experience of their own hands what artistic effects could be attained from stone, iron, bronze, or even from simple logs

or mortar; not only because each monument was the result of collective experience, accumulated in each 'mystery' or craft - it was grand because it was born out of a grand idea.'

'It sprang out of a conception of brotherhood and unity fostered by the city. It had an audacity which could only be won by audacious struggles and victories: it had that expression of vigour, because vigour permeated all the life of the city. A cathedral or a communal house symbolised the grandeur of an organism of which every mason and stone-cutter was the builder, and a medieval building appears - not as a solitary effort to which thousands of slaves would have contributed the share assigned them by one man's imagination; all the city contributed to it.'

'The lofty bell tower rose upon a structure, grand in itself, in which the life of the city was throbbing - not upon a meaningless scaffold like the Paris iron tower, not as a sham structure of stone intended to conceal an iron frame as had been done in the Tower Bridge. The cathedral of a medieval city was intended to glorify the grandeur of the city, to symbolise the union of its crafts, to express the glory of each citizen in a city of his own creation.'

Which is just about as far as you can get from anything that prevails today. Industrialism put an end to the worker as artist. The cybernetics revolution and the advance of automated technology may well put an end to the worker as worker. I would like to see that. But we know that the new elite, the system's analysts, will pursue the state's priorities rather than ours. These new technologies can be highly selective; space is researched, not oceanography, chemical weapons, not agriculture, cars and aircraft, and not the city transport system. I'm not a medievalist, I'm not proposing we try and turn the clock back and neither was Kropotkin - he was only highlighting an evolutionary pattern. At the same time I think it would be hopeless to look for global miracles from the new technologies in the future: as long as the state is running the show they will be used against human beings, they will be used to manipulate and neuter and keep the great mass of people in bondage. We will still be living in a world of scarcity economics, because new technologies will no doubt be able to create scarcity



much more efficiently than today's haphazard measures.

Alright, we have a situation where the people are moronised by the work they do. The worker may be better educated in the formal sense than ever before, but bourgeois education is not helping him to break his chains, his cultural chains. It would be strange if it did.

Bourgeois culture is above all a commercial enterprise. Its whole dynamic pecuniary. Political democracy brought education to the working class - and communications technology, the cinema, radio, television and the printing press had a whole new market opening up to it. All the excreta of bourgeois culture flooded that market. Serious art vanished into little theatres, some of them no bigger than this room, little magazines, which mostly went unread; life-enhancing books disappeared from the shelves in public libraries to make way for the pot-boilers or the pseudo cultural, or the pseudo scientific, or the endless stream of political memoirs - Churchill, MacMillan, Wilson, Shinwell, George Brown. In the formal education prescribed by the state, things were no better: you went a long way before you came across any serious criticism of the basic assumptions which underlie the role of work in the community: before you came across what Paul Goodman calls, in a kind of technical phrase, 'a critique of functionalist aesthetic'.

This of course would be the ultimate subversion.

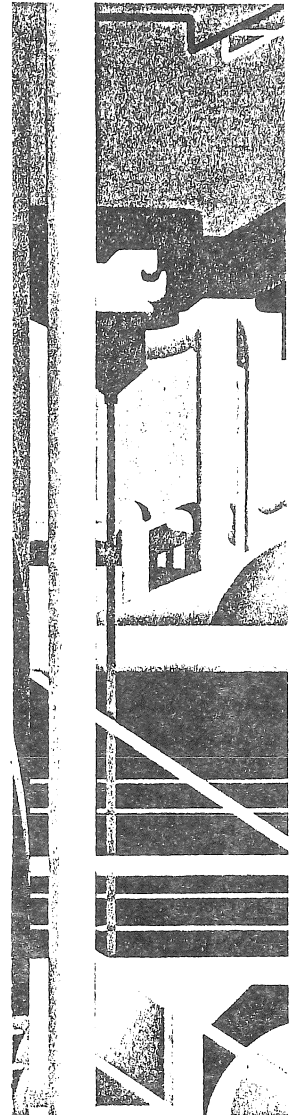
The truth is that the prole exposed to all this bourgeois stimuli seemed less likely than ever to break his chains. Television was doing what the policeman and the teacher and the dole queue and the church had never completely succeeded in doing: the prole was coming round, not to fear the system, but to fall in love with it. TV was steering his thoughts, his emotions, his values. That other circus, parliament, had an exactly similar effect on the so-called revolutionaries who left Clydeside to become MPs in the thirties: Gallagher, Maxton, Shinwell, McGovern, etc. Formal education was not there to liberate the prole: it was there, as a conditioning process, to bind up his thinking faculties along with his physical.

William Morris defined art as 'that which is, or should be, done by the ordinary working man'. He wrote this: 'Nature will not be finally conquered till our work becomes a part of the pleasure of our lives... The hope of pleasure in the work itself... I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies, and that even beasts rejoice in their being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as his body... if we could work thus we would be men'.

Those sentiments were never taken as a serious proposition in Morris's day. The workman's skills represented financial profits for the boss class, nothing else. And to our 20th century ears they sound like a utopian pipe dream. The 19th century was bad and everybody knows just how bad it was, but compare some of the products of the 19th century with like objects manufactured today. In furniture, in cloth, in building, in simple every day objects like porcelain tea cups, wash stands, picture frames, cutlery, fireside pokers, letter racks - all things which you would find in an ordinary working man's house - they have a finish which cannot be matched anywhere today. Men made these things often in atrocious conditions and on starvation wages, men made these things and made them well, because it's man's instinct to achieve quality and wholeness.

Given the adverse conditions in which these things were made, imagine what these men could have done had they full control over their work.

It was the boss class, greedy for ever greater profits, who drove art out of work and who drove work into areas where no art was possible. And it was not without significance that miners, doing the most degrading work of all, are the most fiercely workerist you'll find. They are miners, nothing else. Their total identity is the pit. And they languish and shrink not only as individuals, but as whole communities, when that identity is lost. The conventional wisdom is that it is purely the economic collapse which demoralises such men. But was it not demoralising going down that pit in the first place? 'Crawling about like a snail



in the mud,' as Joe Corrie put it was the beginning of their demoralisation. When the conquistadors put the Inca agricultural workers into the silver mines there were mass suicides. Of course the Inca people did not have the benefit of the Protestant work ethic nor the cunning irrationality of a trade union movement which would enable them to glory in their degradation.

I can hear the words of a very good Scottish poet as I say these things:

Go easy, my friend with the
miners,
Go easy with the tounge and
with pen,
Go easy with the grumping
and clacking:
They earn their pie (money)
like men.

Caw cannie, ma freen wi the myners,
Caw cannie wi tongue an wi pen,
Caw cannie wi grumphin an clackin:
They earn thur py lik men.

And TS Law goes on in that same poem to compare the rhythm of the miner's pick-axe howking out coal to the rhythm of a maker dinging out a poem. I'm quite certain the rhythm's the same but the miner produces profits not poems. There's rhythm in operating a cash register: there's no glory for the girls in Woolworths and Tesco's. Men are unwilling to accept that the work they do diminishes them as men. They invest it with what ought to be there but isn't there - art, creativity, joy even.

Today people talk about shoddy workmanship. But there is no workmanship. For the most part workers have become, at an ever increasing rate, are becoming, as Marx predicted, nothing more than machine minders. This need not be a bad thing in areas where work was only drudgery labour anyway as say the mines, if, that is, the worker controlled the machine, but it's the machines that dictate the pace, the quality, the nature of the working environment, the scarcity, the surplus, the obsolescence.

I don't believe men change their instincts. It is obvious that the proletariat is spiritually deprived, because all positive, life-enhancing, socially useful avenues of self-expression are denied him, but this doesn't mean his basic instinctual needs in self-expression and self-fulfilment are gone from him. They are repressed, but there's plenty of evidence that they go on living.

KARL MARX
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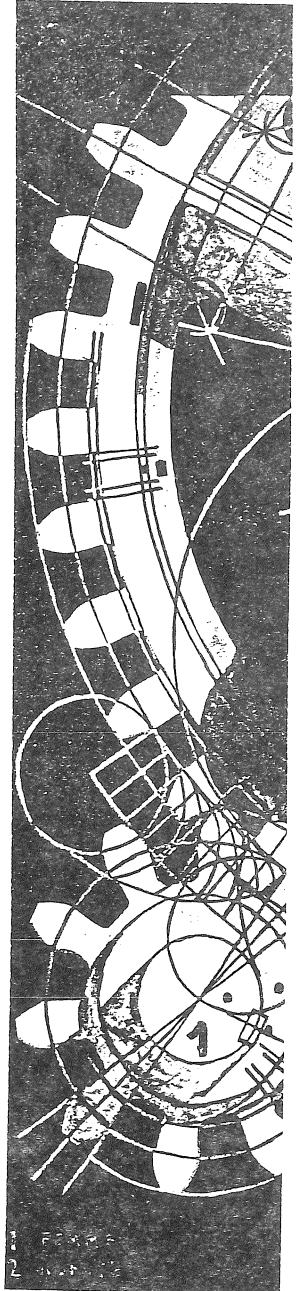
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The prole may have no art, but he's too shrewd to go for the pseudo in art, he leaves that to the non-proletarian members of the working class. Because of course the whole of the working class isn't proletarian. You identify the prole by the job he does or by the job he's just been thrown out of. Many working class people have nothing whatever in common with proletarians either culturally or financially. The prole is by no means the least well off member of the working class.

If we were to consider the prole's plight in terms of economics and nothing else, and that informs the basic rhetoric of all leftists except the anarchists, we would be forced to admit, if we were being honest, that the prole might have more to lose in money terms than certain other so-called conservative or bourgeois members of society. It's not an easy notion for a lot of people on the left to live with, but the prole or at least an appreciable number of them are tied up in the irrationality of capitalism as say any advertising agency. Witness the Trade Unions whose funds are heavily invested in capitalism.

But in this neo-slave society the validity of economics as a gauge of human freedom is an illusion. What matters is that freedom is gone, that the possibility of spiritual growth is gone, that the possibility of self expression is distorted, that art has been divorced from work, that hand has been divorced from brain, and that as a result man is no longer a man of function, no longer a maker but a trained consumer.

I'm not going to offer any global solutions. It's easy to say this should be done, or that should be done. It may be as much as any of us can do to try and identify the problem aright. When you start asking the right questions, it usually means the answer isn't far to seek. If you're not seeing the problem in its totality, or the right way round, you won't be asking the right questions and the solution you come up with will effect no radical change. Politicians and economists do this all the time. They like to think the problem is political or economic or legalistic. Committees of enquiry can operate at that level. The machine minder's alienation goes untouched.



The kind of militancy which is permitted by the state - militancy in pursuit of better wages and conditions - poses no real threat to capitalism. At the end of the day it is just another form of concurrence with the system: as voting is.

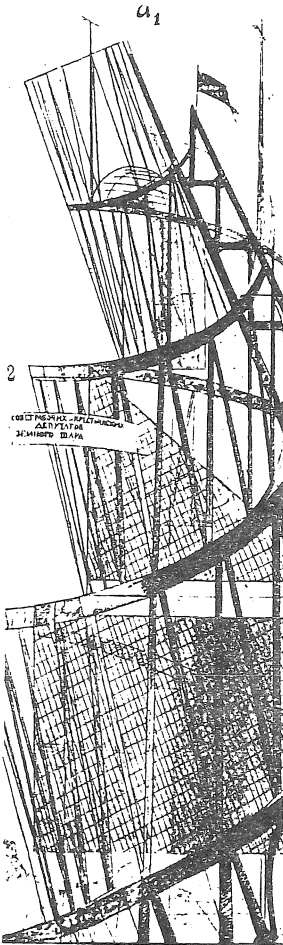
The crucial thing for the state is that proles stay proles. The crucial thing is that proletarian workers do not attempt in large numbers to detach themselves from their role. At the first sign of any such move becoming possible the state takes immediate action to defend itself.

There was an interesting development in the Sixties, during the Paris students revolt, when the students set up a forum, or if you like a real university, within the university, and threw out a well-publicised invitation to the workers to abandon the automated production lines and take their places in their own university. The French government wasn't slow to see the danger. They stepped in with the same kind of violence as Jarewelski brought down on the Polish universities. It was not only brutal physical violence: what followed was a total clamp-down on student's activities, a weeding out of revolutionary organisations within the university and the re-establishment of the old elitist ambience which renders academic work irrelevant to the social conditions we are at any given time living through.

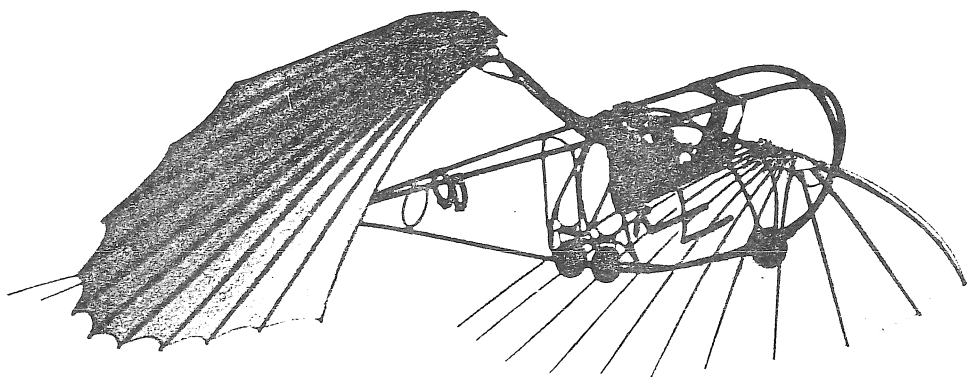
No government likes things to be in a state of flux. They don't like open-ended situations. They like to be quiet certain where all the roads are leading. Everything has to be reconnoitered, charted, rendered safe. Attempting in active co-operation with workers to devise their own curriculum, this went beyond what any state would permit.

Jean Paul Sartre wrote: 'The possibility of detaching oneself from a situation in order to take a point of view concerning it is precisely what we call freedom. No sort of materialism will ever explain this transcendence of a situation, followed by a turning back to it. The revolutionary philosophy must be a philosophy of transcendence'.

This is something of course which the prole is helpless to attempt. He is exhorted on all sides not to transcend his



situation with it: this is workerism. The prole is not geared to the destruction of his own class as a class. His situation may be ameliorated but not abolished. The idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat would only make sense if the proletariat acquired the power to will itself out of existence. I would much rather go for the Syndicalist idea of workers' control, but only because I feel sure if the prole had a free choice he would not do the work he had control over, and that he would have the freedom in an anarcho-syndicalist set-up to change the pattern and processes of production, so that work will no longer be alien to the best things that man aspires to. When work can reflect these things - brotherhood and mutual co-operation - the masses, in the words of Kropotkin 'will have released their artistic and constructive genius which, at the present time, we see as the best guarantee of a still loftier evolution of our race.' And we who live in the last quarter of the 20th century may add that we also see it as the best guarantee for the survival of the race, since survival has become much more problematic than the hope of evolution.



MAY 1986 REVISITED

(continued from page 17)

Neither do we deal well with negative things, or conceptual mine-fields thrown up by our practise. My emotional and physical erosion was just about complete by the time I was supposed to play out my central role, but for which I was unprepared. But how does an Anarchist open an Anarchist Celebration and not get attacked for putting themselves up as a 'leader'? How does an Anarchist speak of our history and of what could be in the face of indifference and general lack of welcome apparent most strongly in that Thursday night crowd (1 May)? I couldn't solve that problem without support, for which I couldn't ask.

Much of the early trust had been lost under a combination of frustration and the lack of support for the festival component, the tension of the bombing of a police-station and a church fire both of which came close to being blamed on Anarchists just a week before the event, and a misdirected attack on me by a woman who had only just arrived back in Australia. In retrospect, she was probably asking the right questions, i.e. about collective processes, but her own practise seemed dubious to say the least, and her manner was not helpful. Partly to try to keep the positive feelings intact the rest of us, and certainly me, preferred not to respond to her aggressive posturing. There are documents available to interested persons giving both sides of a long-standing dispute between her and I, but again, despite an undertaking to do so, it appears the issue will not be covered in the Celebration Book, should it ever get done.

Where I believe there have been gains since the May '86 event is in the groups prepared to acknowledge difficulties, and which were able to draw back, intact, into themselves, to concentrate on the things they were sure about and able to gain comfort from. The ASF (Melbourne) and Redfern Black Rose are likely to emerge stronger from the period of inward-ness, if only because they have strategies based on problem solving.

Photo's of 'the event', when and if they appear in print may provide uplift for jaded spirits, but in the longer term the 'event' can still fulfill its positive potential if, and it's a big 'if', if what was under the surface is brought out and dealt with.

It's not possible here to go into the sorts of things I mean when I call for a renovation of Anarchism, a call which incidentally has nothing to do with recent events in Spain though it may reflect an attempted response to a similar problem. But, in brief, I'm looking for a change in the way we go about 'doing' Anarchism, based on acceptance of the need for 3 things: conflict, morality, and power: 1) constructive, non-violent conflict (which may be very heated, i.e. emotional, when it seems appropriate the key would seem to be a commitment to a successful resolution and not just a continuation of a deadlock), within Anarchist groups and circles to raise standards (in many cases to set standards) about what is acceptable as Anarchism, 2) an acknowledgement of the need to distinguish, albeit subjectively, between 'good' and 'bad' and set out criteria for judging, (the important thing is to be prepared to do it publically, not necessarily to agree with anyone) and 3) a stronger, clearer theory based on power analysis.

Overall, we are all sick, and getting sicker, just by living in industrialised societies. Stopping 'the System' tomorrow will not leave free people, but a gap into which new shysters, opportunists and crazies will flock to take charge of a scared populace.

Internally, i.e. within Anarchist-positive circles, the official Anarchists are a long way out of touch with the 'unofficial' anarchists, that is people who are organising non-hierarchically without any knowledge of Anarchism. In particular, the official Anarchists don't seem to be able to break the chains forged by the mainstream society that has kept them individually-ghettoised or has forced them into wage-slavery (often paid directly by the very State they claim to oppose). Many fail to come to terms with their own alienation and suffer rejection and disillusion in silence, displace their trauma onto irrelevancies, 'escape' into fantasy/science fiction, etc., or set up self-destructive conclusions to their predictions about their own worthlessness, as in heroin

addictions. In short the psychology of Anarchism is not being examined. We cannot treat disputes in our ranks any longer as 'personality differences'. As with the example of pornography, we must learn to deal with it, not simply suppress or ignore it, by separating out the exploitative elements from the not-so.

The long-standing exception to the lack of interest in problem-solving in Anarchist circles, the attempts by the Libertarian Workers to discuss social issues through radio programmes and weekly discussions, has been limited, like that of the ASF's grapplings with industry, by unwillingness to incorporate the logic of personal politics into their work. But these two groups have done better than most.

Overall, there is still insufficient commitment to organisation, a carry-over from spontaneist-ravaged 1970's. We need, not just in Australia, to clearly and often disassociate ourselves from those agitators and those philosophic (so-called) Anarchists who equate Anarchism with non-organisation, non-structure or a non-commitment to long-standing groups. Anarchism is organisation, and never has been about freedom to do your own thing regardless of consequences. Anarchist arguments must be about kinds of organisation and, in particular, what kinds of organisation will get us from where we are to where we hope to be.

Non-organisations and 'free' individuals can and no doubt will continue to do whatever they wish, but they are not displaying Anarchism when they act in an undisciplined, rule-less way. Rebellious outsiders may be potentially Anarchist, but they are not Anarchists merely by being rebellious. The fractured, chaotic graphics, text, music, etc of recent times are not Anarchist simply because they are different or apparently uncensored. In their shouting for attention they are displaying the problem, not the solution.

On the other hand, Anarchist bookshops, like Black Rose, Jura and the Liberation Workers' postal service, once an essential response to a specific problem, are now themselves part of a different problem. I had hoped the AACC might, among other issues, break the prevailing set of attitudes which tended to be frozen into two groups: the 'Book-

shop Anarchists' and the others, mainly unorganised, who call themselves Anarchists. Neither group was able to use the event effectively. The Bookshops, still doing an effective, necessary job, now mark the point at which the construction of Anarchist culture (as analogous to gay culture, women's, hippy or black culture) stalled - peaked and fell back, if you prefer. Anarchists have not yet discovered the way to be Anarchists, as opposed to how to be sellers of Anarchist books. If Anarchists are going to survive as Anarchists, they (we) have to learn to bond as gays, blacks, women, hippies have, at least partially. To have an Anarchist-culture we need to become aware of ourselves and value ourselves as Anarchists, not as people, but as Anarchists.

We need problem-solving techniques and strategies which are not in the classic literature, and which Bookchin, among others, does not mention, but which are necessary to bring an idea into existence.

It was because the 'Movement', at the Celebration itself, and in the period since, did not address itself to these issues that I have responded to the request for an article of post-mortem in the above way. There were some who left the Celebration positive about what happened because they tell me, they expect very little. I hoped for a lot so perhaps I could never have been satisfied.

Bob James.
December, 1987.

POSTSCRIPT:

I sent the first draft of the above to about 15 groups and individuals who I thought might have been interested in my remarks enough to respond. I received 5 responses and 1 promise of a response. Of the 5, 3 were strongly opposed and two were strongly supportive of my remarks.

None of those who thought I unjustly maligned the Celebration provided reasons for their own enjoyment except one who was overjoyed by May '86 because of how much it contrasted with her usual Anarchist environment in New

Zealand. I appreciate the point but it is not relevant to my points, and neither were the other critical responses. In the main they argued that my negative response was my problem (I must have an ulcer, be paranoid, obsessive, up to naive arrogance and evangelistic puritanism'). I very much appreciate the effort these people made in responding but I found no reason to change what I wrote, except in so far as I attempted to balance the final draft with less of my stuff and more positive comments, all of which I've made in other places. My argument remains the same however, indeed the critical responses indirectly support what I'm trying to say. I have seen the person who labelled me an 'evangelistic puritan' obstruct a meeting of a Melbourne Bookshop Group by getting increasingly drunk, argumentative and useless. This same person destroyed the only Plenary session at the May '86 Celebration by raising a personal preference as a universal prohibition. While he was not totally responsible for the confused and frustrating debate which ensued, his initial claim and his subsequent failure to make any attempt to find any compromise says little for his adherence to the notion of personal freedom, which is the line he often runs, as in response to my article for Trafik.

It seems to me such 'free' individuals are afraid to try to organise, being personally insecure and having suffered rejection, etc, when they made previous attempts. I simply say that this is precisely the problem that needs a solution, not a retreat into stagnation and nihilism. I recall my early response, years ago to an anarcho-syndicalist delegate, Susi, introducing me, at a meeting, to 'confederal time' by critically commenting on the meeting's unpunctuality. I remember I thought she was hilarious, (and yes, uptight/puritanic) carrying on about the late-comers stealing her time. I now believe she was right and the idea is a good and sound one.

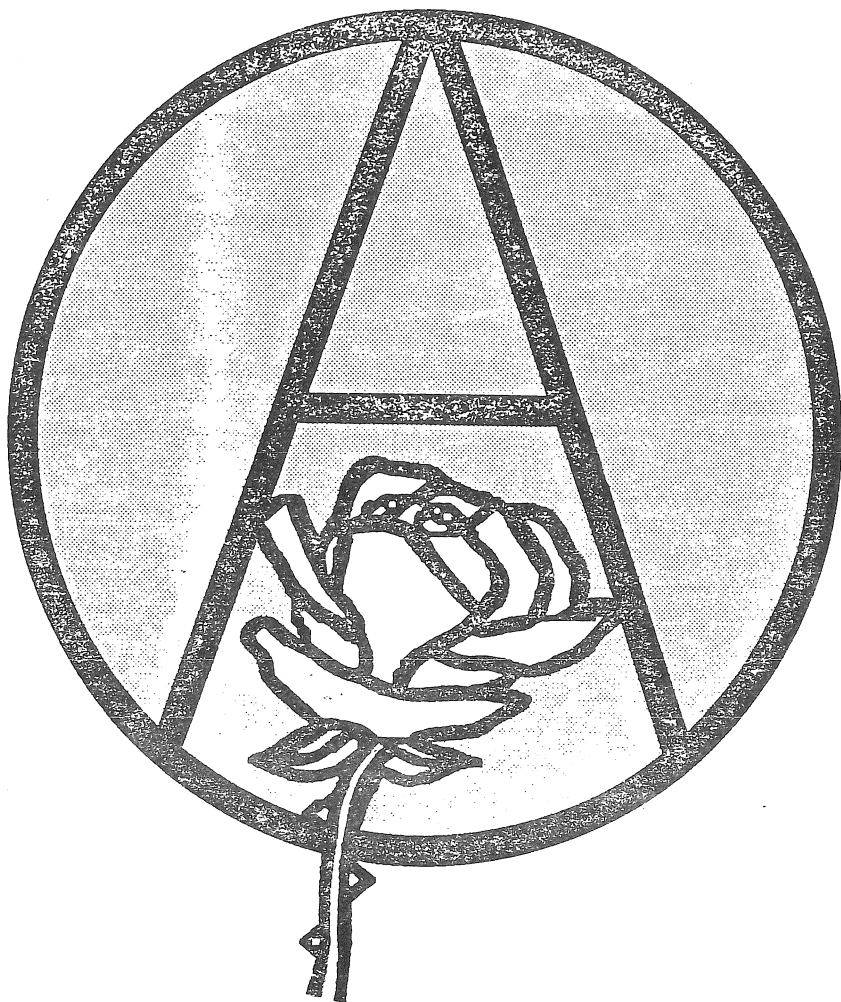
I repeat, I make no claims, or even propose a theory about a 'correct Anarchism'. My intention is rather to ask that the people who argue that Anarchism is what anyone says it is, prove it by either showing its evolution from some historically acceptable fact or event, or by showing that such an attitude works, is viable, has positive consequences for Anarchism. Most of all I ask them to look at the following,

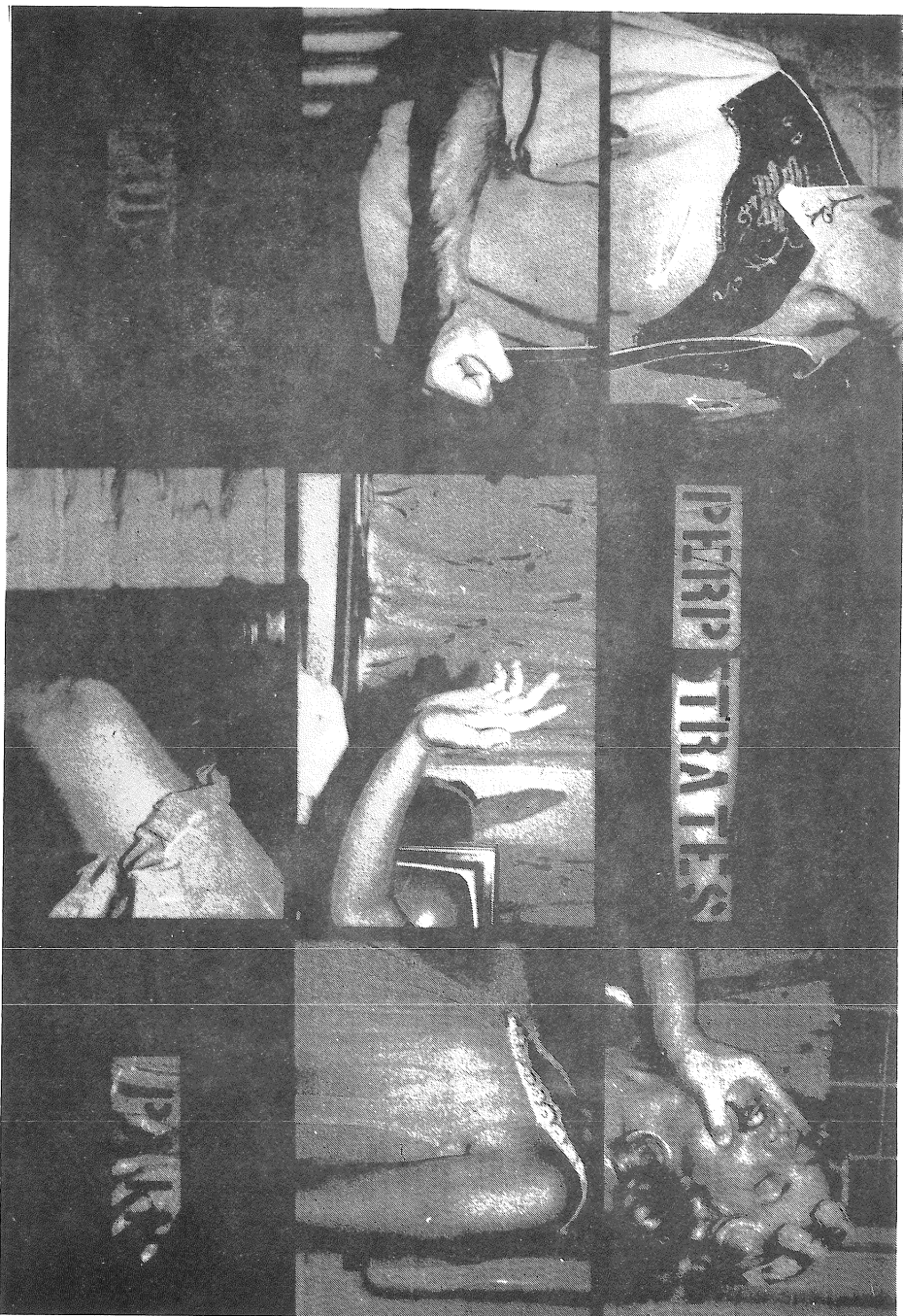
admittedly romanticised view contained in a quote from Bookchin's book about 19th-Century Spanish Anarchists and tell me either that what it says is wrong, or that they have been granted (or have taken upon themselves) the authority to render the ideas contained therein null and void:

These Anarchists took great pride in their vocational skills and were viewed with immense respect by their fellow workers. Most of them were intensely serious and high-minded individuals. They were also open, candid, and like most Spaniards, passionately devoted to their friends and comrades...They were individuals with very strong personalities. They believed (such traits as smoking, drinking, brothel going, and "foul" language) "vices" - demeaning to free people and fostered deliberately by ruling classes to corrupt and enslave the workers spiritually. It was the duty of every... conscious worker and especially of an Anarchist, to live by his or her principles not merely to avow them. By the example of the probity and dignity of their lives such workers would help uplift the rest of their class. Without this moral regeneration of the proletariat, the revolution would eventually be vitiated by all the corruptive realities of bourgeois society...What these Spanish Anarchists aimed for, in effect, was a "counter society" to the old one (not an 'alternate' society or a cooperativist one)...(they) viewed a "counter society" as a terrain in which to remake themselves into revolutionaries and remove their interests from any stake in bourgeois society... The Spanish Anarchists... were intent on restoring the moral fiber of the proletariat, on giving it inner solidity and firmness.

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Ann Wulf, **Power Perpetrates Pain**, 1984-85